

1 STATEMENT OF HENCHI BALOS, SENATOR; ACCOMPANIED BY
2 JONATHAN M. WEISGALL, LEGAL COUNSEL, PEOPLE OF BIKINI

3 Mr. Balos: It is, Mr. Chairman. Thank you,
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 Mr. Chairman, I bring greetings to you and distinguished
6 members of the committee on behalf of Mayor Juda and the
7 Kili/Bikini/Ejit local governments, and all the people of
8 Bikini. Our people will long remember the trip you and
9 Senator Akaka made to Bikini in February to see firsthand the
10 progress we are making on radiological cleanup, resettlement
11 and economic development on the Atoll.

12 Mr. Chairman, we are here today to follow up on some of
13 the issues we discussed on your visit to Bikini. One is the
14 continuation and the extension of the USDA food program for
15 Bikini, which was part of the Compact of Free Association.

16 The second issue is the inclusion of the people of Bikini
17 in the four-atoll health care program, a bill passed by
18 Congress more than 15 years ago, but which has never been
19 implemented in a meaningful way to assist the people of
20 Bikini.

21 The third one, Mr. Chairman, which I believe is not in
22 the legislation, is the additional funding to clean up the
23 whole atoll. Mr. Chairman, next Monday, July 1st, will mark
24 the 50th anniversary of the first atomic test at Bikini Atoll.
25 I do not think anyone in the U.S. Government could have

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1 imagined 50 years ago that the Bikini people would still be
2 exiles from their homeland more than half a century later, but
3 that is the sad fact we face today. We hope that the cleanup
4 of Bikini Atoll will begin soon, so that one day our dream to
5 return to our homeland will come true. Then we will never
6 come back and beg for help from the U.S. Government.

7 Mr. Chairman, I would ask for your permission to allow
8 Jonathan Weisgall to elaborate on these issues, if I may,
9 Mr. Chairman.

10 [The prepared statement of Mr. Balos follows:]
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1 The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Balos.

2 Mr. Weisgall.

3 Mr. Weisgall: I will go through the points very quickly.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 On the USDA food portion of the program, I think it is
6 important to note that this program has been in the Compact
7 for 10 years. This bill would extend it for another 5. A
8 very important part would be a census, to make sure that the
9 program meets with the increase in population. There is a
10 double-whammy here. Number one, there has been a population
11 increase over the last 10 years. And, number two, the dollar
12 level has been frozen. So the peoples of the four atolls have
13 been hurt both ways.

14 On health care, we are in complete agreement with the RMI
15 Government. With respect to the Bikinians, as they
16 contemplate going back to their atoll, as this cleanup begins,
17 I think health coverage is even more important to have.
18 baseline measurements for the people as they go back.

19 The program has had problems over the years. The U.S.
20 Government put this program on the shoulders of the Marshall's
21 Government. I do not think that was the right way to go.
22 Senator deBrum himself, a very important Senator in the
23 Marshall Islands, said just last week that in the Marshall
24 Islands there are more rats than Tylenol in the hospital. And
25 this is a program, I think, that should continue to be the

1 responsibility of the U.S. Government.

2 The devil is going to be in the details. My statement
3 has specific suggestions as to where this should be handled
4 within the U.S. Government, the role of Brookhaven, which I
5 think does a terrific job in the radiological part of this,
6 but is much too expensive in the regular primary/secondary
7 health care part of the program. And that is not meant as any
8 criticism to Brookhaven. It is just you can get more bang for
9 your buck by using a regular health care provider.

10 I do not think the program should be on a reimbursable
11 basis for Bikini or Enewetak. They did not detonate the 66
12 atomic and hydrogen bombs out there.

13 Lastly, I really do not think this hearing can conclude
14 without recognizing that, assuming that this is the last
15 hearing this year -- maybe the only -- on issues involving
16 Micronesia, that this would be the last one that Senator
17 Johnston will be attending. Your contribution to legislation
18 in this area has been tremendous. You have been a great
19 leader. The only thing I can say about your leaving is you
20 are passing the baton, in terms of overall jurisdiction, to
21 someone who I think also has similar concerns and cares about
22 the people. And the very effective bipartisan nature in which
23 issues have been covered by this committee I think has been
24 beneficial all around, both for the Senators and I might add
25 for the staff, who I think have just done terrific jobs over

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1 the years.

2 The trips that have occurred I think have been as good
3 factfinding missions as exist, and a very good use of
4 everyone's time. The rest of my statements and positions are
5 in the written statement, but those are the highlights,
6 Mr. Chairman.

7 [The prepared statement of Mr. Weisgall follows:]

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1 The Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Weisgall.

2 . As we proceed here, I am going to generalize a little
3 bit, but I think we would all agree that no one would object
4 to another extension of the food program. Nobody is nodding
5 their head to the contrary. So you can think about that.

6 And do you all agree we need to do something about the
7 health care? But the amendment is not obviously the right
8 answer and we are going to have to do something about
9 eligibility. And what we would attempt to do is, of course,
10 sit down and put enough time and effort into it, with the
11 professional staff, to reach a conclusion.

12 Again, the question of a decision, by whom and when,
13 relative to whether you use the potassium process or you
14 remove the soil, and the consequences of that are something
15 that are far beyond the scope of expertise of this committee.
16 That is something that Brookings and others, I assume, along
17 with your own individual judgment, are going to have to face.
18 And we have not addressed that in any detail, but perhaps we
19 will in the questioning.

20 I want to go through the panel, but I just want to leave
21 you with those thoughts as we proceed.

22 We will next hear from Senator Ismael John. Senator,
23 good afternoon. Please, proceed.

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